A RELATION OF THE FEARFUL ESTATE OF Francis Spira,

In the year 1548.

Compiled by *Nath. Bacon*, Esq.

The backſlider in heart ſhall be filled with his own waies. Prov. 14. 14.

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A Preface,

FOr truth of this Hiſtory enſuing, beſides circumſtances of place, perſon, time, occaſion, ſo exactly obſerved: I referre my ſelf to the Relation of thoſe Godly men, who in ſeveral Languages have manifeſted to the world the ſeveral paſſages thereof: and although I am not ignorant, that at the firſt they were not onely not credited, but alſo diſcredited and ſlandered, by ſuch as found them to be a

Blur to the *Romane* Profeſſion, yet they loſt not their luſtre thereby, but being acquitted by many Compurgators of ſeveral Nations, and ſome of the Romiſh Religion, being all of them ſpectators of this Tragedy: it occaſioned not only a further manifeſtation & confirmation of the truth, but alſo a large and more frequent confluence, to ſee that which they had formerly only heard of. This partly appeareth out of the ſucceeding Story: but more fully out of an Apology written by *Vergerius* Biſhop of *Juſtinople*, who was accuſed for diſperſing the fame of this Example to the ſtain of Popery, in which Apology to *N. Rottan*, Suffragan of *Padua*, is ſhortly and plainly declared, what was ſaid, what was done, and who were

were present. If that it be demanded, what moved me to compile this Treatise: *Spira*, tell them that it should teach fear and reverence, and indeed among all those that come to see him, few or none returns unshaken. *Vergerius* in his first Epistle saith: I would fain go see him again, but I exceedingly fear and tremble: and in his Apology saith, it is such a rare example, as I would willingly go to the furthest parts of the world to hear or see the like. The Lady *Jane* to her Fathers Chaplaine (that had faln into *Spira's* sinne) saith, remember the lamentable estate of *Spira*. I acknowledge that there hath been formerly a Book published in our Mother tongue, concerning this subject; but as far as I can

learn (for I could never yet obtain any of them) it was nothing ſo large and various as this preſent Treatiſe, and as I have heard, a tranſlation of onely one of the Tractates from whence I have gathered this preſent Diſcourſe in part. Concerning my care and fidelitie in this buſineſſe, it is ſuch as I may truely ſay with out changing of colour, that there is not one ſentence of all this Work attributed unto the perſon of *Spira*, but it hath its warrant, either from the Epiſtles of *Vergerius* and *Gribaldus*, Profeſſours of the Law in *Padua* or from the diſcourſes of *Henry Scringer* a *Scotiſh* man, *Sigiſmund Gelons* a *Tranſilvanian*, and *Mart. Bucha* a Divine of *Baſil*: neither have I taken any other

other libertie then as a relation to weave the aforesaid Discourses one within another, so as those which under several Writers, were before counted several, are now by my indeavours reduced into into one intire History, connexed by due succession of time and occasion, as punctually as could be aimed at, by the circumstances noted in the Writings of those holy and learned men before named.

N. B.

To the { Author & Reader } of this Hiſtory.

Some ſcattered parcels of this Story lay.
In Forraign Papers ; which hadſt not found a way
Thus to Collect had { been obvious prey, Never ſeen the day.

Reader wou'd'ſt ſee how ſinning 'gainſt the light,
Will quench, and leave the ſoul in a ſad night
Of diſcontents. Come hither Reader then, look here,
And learn light-quenching ſins to (fear.

Reader woula'ſt ſee the comfort breathing Spirit
To grieve, What cureleſs griefs it doth demerit ?
Come hither then look here.

Here ſee a ſoul that's all deſpair : A man
All Hell, A ſpirit all one wound ; who can
A wounded ſpirit bear ?

Reader would'ſt ſee (what mayeſt thou never feel)
Deſpairs, Racks, Tortures, whips of burning ſteel ?
Come then look here.

Behold

Behold this man, this Furnace, in whose heart,
Sin hath created Hells. Oh in each part
What flames appear!
His thoughts all stings, words swords, brimstone his breath,
His sighs flames, wishes curses, life a death;
A thousand deaths live in him, he not dead;
A breathing Coarse in living scalding Lead:
And yet he lives our Monument; to tell
How black are quenched lights;
Quench't joyes are double frights,
Black dayes are double nights;
Heaven tasted, lost, a double Hell.

I have call'd thee, Reader, pray so be,
Read this that others read not thee.
Legas Historiam,
Ne fias Historia.

M. N.

Extraor-

EXtraordinary Examples of divine Juſtice, God never intended for a nine dayes wonder; elſe would he, when he exemplified *Lots* wife, have turned her into a ſtatue of melting ſnow, nor of laſting ſalt; which ſtood, as *Joſephus* tels us, till his age, after the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; and as ſome Travellers report, till at this day: *ut quoddam hominibus præſtaret condimentum, quo ſapiant unde illud caveatur exemplum: Aug. de civit. Dei, lib. 16. cap. 30.* for a ſeaſon againſt corruption, a preſervative againſt Apoſtacy. This Tragedie, when freſh and new, was the converſion and confirmation of ſundry Wor-

thies: *Vergerius*, a daily ſpectator thereof, forſaking a rich Biſhoprick of *Juſtinopolis*, and tents of Antichriſt, went to *Baſil* and dyed a worthy Proteſtant: many Nations had Eye-witneſſes of their own Students then in the Univerſity of *Padua* who penned the ſtory, the Copies whereof are frequently revived; our Engliſh ones were very defective, and now worn out of ſhops and hands; ſundry Manuſcripts of this abroad, imperfect; which moved me to compare this labour of a worthy Gentleman (who faithfully tranſlated it out of *Italian*, *French* and *Dutch* Letters) with the *Latine* of *Cœlius Secundus*, *Curio*, *Matthæus Gribaldus*, profeſſors of the Civil Law in *Padua*: *Sigiſmond Gelous a Tranſilvanian*, *Henricus*

Henricus Scotus, all daily visitors of *Spira*, and find it accord with them. Touching *Spira's* person, I find most learned Writers do incline to the right and hopeful hand; moved by his sweet, humble, and charitable speeches; some few desperate ones excepted, that fell from him in some little agonies, which kept him fasting and watching about six moneths space, eating nothing but what was forced down his throat. The summe of *Calvins* and *Borrhaus* their counsels* is, that all learn to take heed of bakſliding, which Gods soul abhors, and not to dally with Conscience, and hell on earth, if justly incensed; more to be feared then the Spanish Inquisition, or all the Strappadoes and torments in the world;

(* Who write largely of the use of this pattern)

and to take heed of *Spira's* principal Errors: which were, to diſpute with Satan over-buſily in time of weakneſſe; eſpecially to reaſon, and conclude from preſent ſenſe, to Gods paſt Reprobation, and future Damnation: both which is hard, if poſſible, for any man to determine in his own, much more in others caſes: ſo commending thee to his grace, who is able to eſtabliſh thee to the end: I bid thee farewel, and hope well, while the ſpace of Grace laſteth: *Dum ſpiras, ſpera*; ſo mayeſt thou take good and no hurt, by the reading of this terrible Example.

A RELATION of the fearful estate of *Francis* SPIRA.

IN the year 1548. when the glorious Sun of the Gospel was but newly risen in *Europe*; in the days of the raign of *Edward*, the Sixth of that name, King of ENGLAND. In the Territorie, and under the Jurisdiction of the City of *Venice*, being the very border of *Italy*, in the town of *Citta-*

lla, lived one *Francis Spira*, a Civil Lawyer, an Advocate of great rank and eſteem, being of known learning, and eloquence, of great experience, of carriage circumſpect and ſevere, his ſpeech grave and compoſed, his countenance ſharp and auſtere, every way befitting that authority whereunto he was advanced, endowed with outward bleſſings, of wife, and eleven children, and wealth in abundance: what his worſt parts were, I have no other warrant then his own words, which (if not tainted overmuch with the bitterneſſe of a deſperate minde, and bearing the countenance rather of paſſion, then of ſober confeſſion) may ſeem to add a period to all further commendations.

"I

"*I was* (ſaith he) *exceſsive-*
"*ly covetous of mony, and ac-*
"*cordingly I applyed myſelf to*
"*get by injuſtice, corrupting ju-*
"*ſtice by deceit, inventing tricks*
"*to delude juſtice: good cauſes*
"*I either defended deceitfully, or*
"*ſold them to the adverſary per-*
"*fidiouſly: ill cauſes I maintai-*
"*ned with all my might: I wit-*
"*tingly oppoſed the known truth,*
"*and the truſt committed unto*
"*me, I either betrayed or per-*
"*verted.* Thus having worn out forty four years, or thereabouts, and the news of the new, or rather newly revived opinions of *Luther* comming into thoſe parts, repreſented an object of novelty unto him; who being as deſirous to know, as he was famous for knowledge, ſuffered not theſe wandring opinions to

paſs unexamined; but ſearching into the Scriptures, and into all books of Controverſie that he could get, both old and new; and finding more then fame or opinion, he began to taſte their nature ſo well, as he entertains, loves, and ownes them at length; and with ſuch zeal, as he became a profeſſor, yea a teacher of them; firſt to his wife, children, and family; and after to his friends, and familiar acquaintance, and in compariſon, ſeem'd to neglect all other affaires; intending ever to preſs this main point, that *We muſt wholly, and onely depend on the free and unchangeable love of God in the death of Chriſt, as the onely ſure way to ſalvation*: and this was the ſumme of all his diſcourſe: and this continued for the ſpace of

of ſix years, or thereabouts; even ſo long as this fire could keep it ſelf within private walls, but at length, it brake forth into publick meetings, ſo as the whole Province of *Padua* dawned by the luſtre thereof. The Clergy finding the trade of their pardons to decay; and their Purgatory to wax cold, began to beſtirre themſelves: gloſing their actions, firſt, with calumnious aſperſions upon the whole profeſſion; then more plainly ſtriking at *Spira* with grievous accuſation. And to effect their purpoſe, ſome promiſe labour, others favour, ſome advice, others maintenance; all joyn to divide, either his ſoul from his body, or both from God.

Now was *John Caſa*, the Popes Legate, reſident at *Venice*,

nice, being by birth a *Florentine*: and one that wanted neither malice againſt thoſe of this way, nor craftineſſe to effect his malicious purpoſes; To him theſe men repair with out-cries againſt *Spira*, that he was the man that condemned the received rites of the Church: deluded the Eccleſiaſtical power, and ſcandalized the policie thereof: one of no mean rank: being a man of Account and authory, and thereunto learned in the Scriptures, elegant in ſpeech: and in one word, a dangerous *Lutheran*: having alſo many diſciples, and therefore not to be deſpiſed.

At this began the *Legat* to caſt his eye on the terrible alteration that lately had happened in *Germany*; where, by the means

means of one onely *Luther*, the Romiſh Religion had ſuffered ſuch a blow, as that it could neither be cured by diſſimulation, nor defended by power: but the Clergy muſt either mend their manners, or loſe their dignities: on the other ſide, when he ſaw how propenſe the common people, inhabiting in the bordering Countries of *Italy*, were to entertain thoſe new opinions, he now thought it no time to diſpute, or perſwade: but with ſpeed repairs to the *Senate*, and procures authority from them to ſend for *Spira*.

Spira by this time had conſidered with himſelf of the nature of his carriage, how evident and notorious it was, and therefore ſubject to be envied by ſuch, as neither liked

his

his perſon nor religon; he perceived that his opinions were neither retired nor ſpeculative, but ſuch as aimed at the overthrow of the *Romiſh* Faction, and a change of policy; wherein at the beſt, he could expect but a bloody victory; and that his enemies wanted neither power nor occaſion, to call him to account in publick: when he muſt either *Apoſtatize*, and ſhamefully give his former life, yea his own conſcience, the lye, or endure the utmoſt malice of his deadly enemies; or forſake his wife, children, friends, goods, authority: yea, his dear Countrey; and betake himſelf to a forraign people, there to endure a thouſand miſeries, that do continually wait upon a voluntary exile.

Being

Being thus diſtracted, and toſſed in the reſtleſs waves of doubt, without guide to truſt to, or haven to fly to for ſuccour; on the ſuddain, Gods Spirit aſſiſting, he felt a calm, and began to diſcourſe with himſelf, in this manner.

Why wandreſt thou thus in uncertainties, unhappy man? caſt away fear, put on thy ſhield, the ſhield of faith; Where is thy wonted courage, thy goodneſſe, thy conſtancy? remember that Chriſts glory lies at the ſtake: ſuffer thou without fear, & he will defend thee, he will tel thee what thou ſha'tanſwer; he can beat down all danger, bring thee out of priſon, raiſe thee from the dead; cõſider Peter *in the dungeon, the Martyrs in the fire; if thou makeſt a good confeſſion, thou maieſt indeed go to priſon, or death but an eternal reward in heaven remains*

remains for thee: What haſt thou in this world comparable to Eternal life, to everlaſting happineſſe? if thou doſt otherwiſe, think of the ſcandal; (common people live by example, thinking whatever is done, is well done;) fear the loſs of peace and joy, fear hell, death, and eternal wrath; or if thy fleſh be ſo ſtrong, as to cauſe thee to doubt of the iſſue, fly thy Countrey; get thee away, though never ſo far rather then deny the Lord of life.

Now was *Spira* in reaſonable quiet, being reſolved to yield to theſe weighty reaſons: yet holding it wiſdom to examine all things, he conſults alſo with fleſh and blood; thus the battel doth renew, and the fleſh begins in this manner: *Be well adviſed, fond man, conſider reaſons on both*

ſides

ſides, and then judge : how canſt thou thus overween thine own ſufficiency, as thou neither regardeſt the examples of thy Progenitors, nor the judgement of the whole Church : doeſt thou not conſider, what miſery this thy raſhneſſe will bring thee unto? thou ſhalt loſe all thy ſubſtance, gotten with ſo much care and travell : thou ſhalt undergo the moſt exquiſite torments that malice it ſelf can deviſe : thou ſhalt be counted an Heretick of all : and to cloſe up all, thou ſhalt die ſhamefully. What thinkeſt thou of the loathſome ſtinking dungeon, the bloody axe, the burning fagot? are they delightful? Be wiſe at length, and keep thy life and honour : thou mayeſt live to do much good to good men, as God commands thee : thou mayeſt be an ornament to thy Countrey;

and

and put caſe, thy Countries *loſſe would be of ſmall eſteem with thee; Wilt thou bring thy friends alſo into danger? thou haſt begotten children, wilt thou now cut their throats, and inhumanely butcher them, which may in time bring honour to their* Countrey, *glory to God, help and furtherrance to his* Church? *go to the Legat, weak man, freely confeſs thy fault, and help all theſe miſeries.* Thus did the cares of this world, and the deceitfulneſs of riches, choak the good Seed that was formerly ſown: ſo as fearing, he faints, and yields unto the allurements of this preſent world; and being thus blinded, he goes to the Legat at *Venice*, and ſalutes him with this news.

Having for theſe divers years

years entertained an opinion concerning ſome Articles of faith, contrary to the Orthodox, and received judgment of the Church; and utterred many things againſt the authority of the Church of Rome, *and the univerſal Biſhop: I humbly acknowledge my fault and Error, and my folly in miſleading others: I therefore yield my ſelf in all obedience, to the Supreame Biſhop, into the Boſome of the Church of Rome; never to depart again from the traditions and decrees of the holy See: I am heartily ſorry for what is paſt; and I humbly beg pardon for ſo great an offence.*

The *Legat* perceiving *Spira* to faint, he purſues him to the utmoſt; he cauſeth a recitation of all his Errors to be drawn in writing, together with

with the Confeſſion annexed to it, and commands *Spira* to ſubſcribe his name there, which accordingly he did, then the *Legate* commands him to return to his own Town : and there to declare this Confeſſion of his, and to acknowledge the whole Doctrine of the Church of *Rome* to be holy, and true, and to abjure the Opinions of *Luther*, and other ſuch Teachers, as falſe, and Heretical : *Man knowes the beginning of ſinne, but who bounds the iſſues thereof ?* *Spira* having once loſt footing, goes down amain, he cannot ſtay, nor gain-ſay the *Legate* : but promiſeth to accompliſh his whole will and pleaſure : he ſoon addreſſeth himſelf for his Journey : and being onward in the way, he thinks

thinks himſelf of the large ſpoiles he had brought away, from the Conflict with the *Legate* : what glorious teſtimony he had given of his great faith, and conſtancy in Chriſts cauſe : and to be plain, how impiouſly he had denied Chriſt, and his Goſpel at *Venice* : and what he promiſed to do further in his own Countrey : and thus partly with fear, and partly with ſhame being confounded, he thought he heard a voyce ſpeaking unto him, in this manner.

Spira, *What doſt thou here? whither goeſt thou? haſt thou, unhappy man, given thy handwriting to the Legate at* Venice? *yet ſee thou doeſt not ſeal it in thy own Countrey. Doeſt thou indeed think eternal life ſo mean,*

mean, as that thou preferreſt this preſent life before it? doſt thou well in preferring wife and children before Chriſt? is the windy applauſe of the people, better indeed then the glory of God; and the poſſeſsion of this worlds good more dear to thee, then the ſalvation of thine own Soul? is the ſmall uſe of a moment of time more deſireable, then eternall wrath is dreadfull? Think with thy ſelf, what Chriſt endured for thy ſake; is it not equall, thou ſhouldeſt ſuffer ſomewhat for him? Remember, man, that the ſufferings of this preſent life, are not comparable to the glory that ſhall be revealed: if thou ſuffereſt with him, thou ſhalt alſo reign with: thou canſt not anſwer for what thou haſt already done; nevertheleſſe, the gate of mercy is not quite ſhut; take heed

that

that thou heapeſt not ſin upon ſin, leſt thou repent when it will be too late.

Now was *Spira* in a wilderneſſe of doubt, not knowing which way to turn him, nor what to do: yet being arrived in his own Country, and amongſt his friends, with ſhame enough he relates what he had done, and what he had further promiſed to do; and how the terror of God on the one ſide, and the terror of this world on the other ſide, did continually rack him; and therefore he deſired of them advice in this ſo doubtful a caſe: his friends upon ſmall deliberation anſwered; that it was requiſite he ſhould take heed that he did not in any wiſe betray his wife and children, and all his friends into danger,

danger, ſeeing that by ſo ſmall a matter as the reciting of a little Schedule, which might be done in leſſe ſpace then half an hour, he might both free himſelf from preſent danger, and preſerve many that depended upon him : adding moreover, that he could get no Credit in relenting from that which he had already in greateſt part performed before the Legate at *Venice*, and that in the perfect accompliſhing thereof, little or no diſcredite could ariſe, more then what by the former action already he had ſuſtained : on the other ſide, if he did not perform his promiſe made to the Legate, he could neither diſcharge himſelf of the ſhame which he had already incurred ; nor avoyd far more

more heavy and inſupportable injuries, then probably he ſhould have endured, if he had perſiſted obſtinately in his former Opinions.

This was the laſt blow of the battel : and *Spira* utterly overcome, goes to the Prætor, and profers to perform his promiſe made to the Legate, who in the mean time, had taken order to have all things ready, and had ſent the inſtrument of abjuration ſigned by *Spira*, to the Prætor, by the hands of a certain Prieſt. All that night the miſerable man ware out with reſtleſſe cares, without any minute of reſt, the next morning being come, he gets up, and being ready, he deſperately enters into the publick Congregation, where Maſs being finiſhed, in the preſence

preſence of friends and enemies, and of the whole Aſſembly; being by eſtimation near two thouſand people; yea, and of Heaven it ſelf, he recites that infamous abjuration, word for word, as it was written: it being done, he was fined at thirty pieces of gold, which he preſently paid: five whereof were given to the Prieſt that brought the abjuration: the other twenty five were imployed towards the making of a *Shryne* to put the *Euchariſt* in; then was he ſent home, reſtored to his Dignities, goods, wife, and children; No ſooner was he departed, but he thought he heard a direful voyce ſaying to him; *Thou wicked wretch, thou haſt denied me, thou haſt renounced the covenant of thy obedience, thou haſt broken*

broken thy vow, hence Apoſtate, bear with thee the ſentence of thy eternal damnation : he trembling and quaking in body and mind, fell down in a ſwoune; relief was at hand for the body, but from that time forward, he never found any peace or eaſe of minde; but continuing in unceſſant torments, he profeſſed that he was captived under the revenging hand of the great God : that he heard continually that fearful ſentence of Chriſt that juſt Judg: that he knew he was utterly undone : that he could neither hope for grace, nor Chriſts interceſſion with God the Father in his behalf: thus was his fault ever heavy on his heart, and ever his Judgment before his eyes.

Now began his friends

ſome of them, to repent too late of their raſh counſel: others not looking ſo high as the Judgment of God, laid all the blame upon his Melancholick conſtitution: that overſhadowing his judgement, wrought in him a kind of madneſſe: every one cenſured as his fancy led him, yet for remedy all agreed in this, to uſe both the wholeſome help of Phyſitians, and the pious advice of Divines, and therefore thought it meet to convey him to *Padua*, an Univerſity of note, where plenty of all manner of means was to be had: this they accordingly did, both with his wife, children, and whole family: others alſo of his friends accompanying him: and being arrived at the houſe of one *James Ardin*, in Saint

Saint *Leonards* Pariſh, they ſent for three Phyſitians of moſt note, who upon due obſervation of the effects, and of other Symptomes of his diſeaſe, and ſome private conference one with another, amongſt themſelves, returned their verdict in this manner, *viz.* That they could not diſcern that his body was afflicted with any danger or diſtemper originally from it ſelf, by reaſon of the over-ruling of any humour; but that this Malady of his did ariſe from ſome grief, or paſſion of his minde, which being over-burthened, did ſo oppreſs the ſpirits, as they wanting free paſſage, ſtirred up many ill humours, whereof the body of man is full : and theſe aſcending up into the brain, troubled the fancy

ſhadowed the ſeat of the judgment, and ſo corrupted it: this was the ſtate of his diſeaſe, and that outward part that was viſible to the eye of nature; this they indeavoured to reform by purgation, either to conſume, or at leaſt to divert the courſe of thoſe humours from the brain; but all their skill effected nothing, which *Spira* noting ſaid: *Alas poor men, how far wide are you? do you think that this diſeaſe is to be cured by potions? believe me there muſt be another manner of medicine, it is neither plaiſters, nor drugs, that can help a fainting ſoul caſt down with ſenſe of ſin, and the wrath of God; t'is onely Chriſt that muſt be the Phyſitian, and the Goſpel the ſoul Antidote.*

The Phyſitians eaſily believed

lieved him after they had underſtood the whole truth of the matter, and therefore they wiſhed him to ſeek ſome ſpiritual comfort. By this time the fame of this man was ſpred over all *Padua*, and the neighbour Countrey: partly for that he was a man of Eſteem: partly becauſe as the diſeaſe, ſo the occaſion was eſpecially remarkable: for this was not done in a corner: ſo as daily there came multitudes of all ſorts to ſee him: ſome out of curioſity onely to ſee and diſcourſe: ſome out of a pious deſire to try all means that might reduce him to comfort again, or at leaſt to benefit themſelves, by ſuch a ſpectacle of miſery, and of the juſtice of God. Amongſt theſe, *Paulus Vergerius* Biſhop of

Juſtinopolis, and *Matheus Gribauldus*, deſerve eſpecially to be named, as the moſt principal labourers for this mans comfort. They find him now about fifty years of age, neither affected with the dotage of old age, nor with the unconſtant headſtrong paſſion of youth, but in the ſtrength of his experience and judgement: in a burning heat, calling exceſſively for drink: yet his underſtanding active, quick of apprehenſion, witty in diſcourſe above his ordinary manner, and judiciouſly oppoſite: his friends laboured him by all fair means to receive ſome nouriſhment, which he obſtinately gain-ſaying, they forcibly infuſed ſome liquid ſuſtenance into his mouth, moſt of which he ſpit out again:

gain: exceedingly chafing and in this fretting mood of his, ſaid: As it is true *that all things work for the beſt to thoſe that love God*, ſo to the wicked all are contrary: 'for whereas a plen- 'tiful of-ſpring is the bleſſing 'of God, and his reward, being 'a ſtay to the weak eſtate of 'their aged parents; to me they are 'a cauſe of bitterneſs & vexa- 'tion: they do ſtrive to make 'me tire out this miſery: I 'would fain be at an end: I de- 'ſerve not this dealing at their 'hands: O that I were gone 'from hence, that ſome body 'would let out this weary ſoul.

Rom. 8. 28

His friends ſaluted him, and asked him, what he conceived to be the cauſe of his diſeaſe: forthwith he brake out into a lamentable diſcourſe of the paſſages formerly related, and

that with ſuch paſſionate Elocution, that he cauſed many to weep, and moſt to tremble. They contrarily, to comfort him, propounded many of Gods promiſes recorded in the Scripture; and many examples of Gods mercy: *My ſin* (ſaid he) *is greater then the mercy of God.* Nay, anſwered they, the mercy of God is above all ſin; God would have all men to be ſaved: *It's true* (quoth he) *he would have all that he hath elected, to be ſaved; he would not have damned Reprobates to be ſaved*; I *am one of that number*; I *know it, for* I *willingly, and againſt my knowledge denyed Chriſt: and* I *feel that he hardens, and will not ſuffer me to hope.*

After ſome ſilence, one aſked him whether he did not believe

believe that Doctrine to be true, for which he was accuſed before the Legate: he anſwered; I *did believe it when* I *denyed it, but now* I *neither believe that, nor the Doctrine of the Roman Church*; I *believe nothing*, I *have no faith, no truſt, no hope*; I *am a Reprobate like* Cain, *or* Judas, *who caſting away all hope of mercy, fell into deſpair; and my friends do me great wrong; that they ſuffer me not go to the place of unbelievers, as* I *juſtly deſerve.*

Here they began ſharply to rebuke him; requiring, and charging him that in any wiſe he did not violate the mercy of God; to which he anſwered: "The mercy of God is ex-
'ceeding large, & extends to all
'the elect: but not to me or any
'like to me, who are ſealed up

Rom. 2. 15.

'to wrath: I tel you I deserve it, 'my own conscience condemns 'me; what needeth any other 'Judge? Christ came (said they) to take away sin, & calling for a book, they read unto him the Passion of Christ; and comming to his nailing to the crosse, *Spira* said: "This indeed is 'comfortable to such as are E-'lected, but as for me wretch, 'they are nothing but grief and 'torment, because I contemned 'them. Thus roaring for grief, and tossing himself up and down upon the bed as he lay, he intreated them to read no more: As *Gribauldus* was coming to see him, *Vergerius* said to *Spira*, dear Sir, here is Doctor *Gribauldus*, a godly and faithful friend of yours, come to see you: "He is welcome "(said he) but he shall finde me

"me ill : *Gribauldus* replyed, Sir, this is but an illuſion of the divel, who doth what he can to vex you; but turn you to God with your whole heart, and he is ready to ſhew you mercy ; the Lord you know is full of mercy; it is he that hath ſaid, that as *often as a ſinner repents of his ſin, he will remember his ſins no more.* Conſider this in the Example of *Peter* that was Chriſts familiar, and an Apoſtle; and yet denyed him thrice with an oath, and yet God was merciful unto him : conſider the thief that ſpent his whole life in wickedneſſe, and for all that, did not God graciouſly reſpect him in the laſt minute of his life ? Is the Lords hand now ſhortned that it cannot ſave ? to this *Spira* anſwered ; Pſal. 129

"*If*

Luk.22. 61.

If Peter *grieved and repented, it was becauſe Chriſt beheld him with a merciful eye; and in that he was pardoned, it was not becauſe he wept, but becauſe God was gracious to him; but God reſpects not me, and therefore I am a Reprobate: I feel no comfort can enter into my heart, there's place there but onely for torments and vexings of ſpirit: I tell you my caſe is properly mine own; no man ever was in the like plight, and therefore my eſtate is fearful.*

Then roaring out in the bitterneſſe of his ſpirit, ſaid: *It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*: the violence of his paſſion and action ſutable, did amaze many of the beholders; inſomuch as ſome of them ſaid with a whiſpering voyce that he was

poſſeſſed

poſſeſſed : he overhearing it, ſaid : *do you doubt it? I have a whole Legion of divels that take up their dwellings within me, and poſſeſſe me as their own : and juſtly too, for I have denied Chriſt.* Whether did you that willingly or not? (ſaid they.) *That's nothing to the purpoſe* (ſaid *Spira*:) *Chriſt ſaith, whoſoever denies me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven : Chriſt will not be denyed, no not in word; and therefore it is enough, though in heart I never denyed him.* Matth. 10.33.

They obſerving his diſtemper to ariſe from the ſenſe and horror of the pains of hell, asked him whether he thought there were worſe pains then what he endured for the preſent; he ſaid, that he knew *there were far worſe pains then*

thoſe

Pſal. 1. "thoſe that he then ſuffered: "for the wicked ſhall riſe to "their judgment, but they ſhall "not ſtand in judgment: this I "tremble to think of: yet do "I deſire nothing more, then "that I might come to that "place, where I may be ſure to "feel the worſt, and to be freed "from fear of worſe to come.

I but you are to conſider (ſaid one) that thoſe opinions for which you were accuſed before the Legate, were impious; and therefore you are not to think you denyed Chriſt, but rather that you confeſſed him, acknowledging the infallible truth of the Catholick Church. "Truly (ſaid he) when "I did deny thoſe opinions, I "did think them to be true, and "yet I did deny them.

Go to (ſaid others;) now then

then believe that they are true. 'Now I cannot (ſaid he;) God 'will not ſuffer me to believe 'them, nor truſt in his mercy: 'what would you have me do? 'I would fain attain to this 'power, but cannot, though I 'ſhould preſently be burnt for 'it. But why do you, ſaid the other, eſteem this ſo grievous a ſin, when as the learned *Legate* conſtrained you to it, which he ſurely would not have done, if your former opinions had not been Erroneous: no, good *Francis*, the divel beſets thee, let not therefore the grievouſneſs of thy ſin, (if any ſuch be) amaze thee. 'You ſay right "(replyed he,) the divel hath 'poſſeſt me, and God hath left 'me to his power; for I find, 'I can neither believe the goſpel, nor truſt in Gods mercy;

I have ſinned againſt the Holy Ghoſt; and God by his immutable decree, hath bound me over to perpetual puniſhment, without any hope of pardon; It's true that the greatneſſe of ſin, or the multitude of them, cannot binde Gods mercy: all thoſe many ſins that in the former part of my life I have committed, then did not ſo much trouble me, for I truſted that God would not lay them to my charge: but now having ſinned againſt the Holy Ghoſt, God hath taken away from me all power of repentance; and now brings all my ſins to remembrance, and thus guilty of one, guilty of all. And therefore it's no matter whether my ſins be great or ſmall, few or many; they are ſuch as Chriſts blood, nor Gods mercy belongs to me: God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom

Rom. 9. 11. and Rom. 4.

Jam. 2. 10.

Rom. 9. 18.

whom he will he hardneth; this is it that gnawes my heart, he hath hardned me; and I find that he daily more and more doth harden me, and therefore I am out of hope; I feel it, and therefore cannot but deſpair: I tell you, there was never ſuch a monſter as I am; never was any man alive a ſpectacle of ſo exceeding miſery. I knew that juſtification is to be expected by Chriſt, and I denyed and abjured it to the end I might keep this frail life from adverſity, and my children from poverty; and now behold, how bitter this life is to me; and God onely knows, what ſhall become of this my family; but ſurely no good is likely to betide it, but rather daily worſe and worſe; and ſuch a ruine at the length, as that one ſtone ſhall not be left on another.

But

But why ſhould you (ſaid *Gribauldus*) conceit ſo deeply of your ſin, ſeeing you can not but know, that many have denyed Chriſt, yet never fell into deſpair? "Well (ſaid he) I can ſee 'no ground of comfort for 'ſuch, neither can I warrant 'them from Gods revenging 'hand in wrath; though it plea- 'ſeth God yet to ſuffer ſuch to 'be in peace: and beſides, there 'wil a time of danger come, & 'then they ſhall be throughly 'tryed: & if it were not ſo, yet 'God is juſt in making me an 'example to others; & I cannot 'juſtly complain: there is no 'puniſhment ſo great, but I have 'deſerved it, for this ſo heinous 'offence: I aſſure you it is no 'ſmall matter to deny Chriſt, and 'yet it is more ordinary then 'commonly men do conceive of: 'it is not a denyal made before a

Magiſtrate

'Magiſtrate as it is with me: for 'as often as a Chriſtian doth 'diſſemble the known truth: as 'often as he approves of falſe 'worſhip, by preſenting him-'ſelf at it, ſo often as he hath 'not things worthy of his cal-'ling, or ſuch things as are un-'worthy of his calling, ſo often 'he denyes Chriſt: thus did I, & 'therefore am juſtly puniſhed 'for it. Your eſtate (quoth *Gribauldus*) is not ſo ſtrange, as you make it: *Job* was ſo far gone, that he complained God had ſet him as a mark againſt him: and *David* that was a man after Gods own heart, complained often that God had forſaken him, and was become his enemy: yet both received comfort again: comfort your ſelf therefore, God will come at length, though he

he now ſeem far off.

O Brother (anſwered *Spira*) *I believe all this; the divels believe and tremble; but* David *was ever elected and dearly beloved of God; and though he fell, yet God took not utterly away his holy Spirit; and therefore was heard when he prayed,* Lord take not thy holy Spirit from me: *but I am in another caſe, being ever accurſed from the preſence of God: neither can I pray as he did, becauſe his holy Spirit is quite gone, and cannot be recalled; and therefore I know I ſhall live in continual hardneſs ſo long as I live: O that I might feel but the leſt ſenſe of the love of God to me, though but for one ſmall moment, as I now feel his heavy wrath that burns like the torments of hell within me, and afflicts my Conſcience with pangs unutterable*

unutterable: verily deſperation is hell it ſelf.

Here *Gribauldus* ſaid, I do verily believe, *Spira*, that God having ſo ſeverely chaſtiſed you in this life, correcteth you in mercy here, that he may ſpare you hereafter, and that he hath mercy ſealed up for you in time to come.

Nay (ſaid *Spira*) *hence do I know that I am a Reprobate, becauſe he afflicteth me with hardneſſe of heart: O that my body had ſuffered all my life long, ſo that he would be pleaſed to releaſe my ſoul, and eaſe my Conſcience, this burthened Conſcience.*

Gribauldus being deſirous to eaſe his mind from the continual meditation of his ſin; as alſo to ſound how for the preſent he ſtood affected to the Romiſh Church: asked him what

what he thought became of the ſouls of men ſo ſoon as they departed out of the body: to which he anſwered.

'Although this be not ſo fully "revealed in Scripture: yet I "verily believe that the ſouls "of the Elect go preſently to "the Kingdom of glory: and "not that they ſleep with the "body, as ſome do imagine.

Very well, ſaid one of the ſpectators: why do the Scriptures then ſay, that God brings down to hell, and raiſeth up: ſeeing it cannot be meant of the eſtate of the ſoul after neath, which as thou ſayeſt, either goeth to heaven without change, or to hell without redemption: it muſt be underſtood of the eſtate of the ſoul in this life: like that wherein thou art at this preſent: and

1 Sam. 2. 9.

oftentimes we ſee that God ſuffers men to fall into the jawes of deſpair, and yet raiſeth them up again: and therefore deſpair not, but hope: it ſhall be even thus with thee in his good time.

This is the work (quoth *Spira*) *this the labour: for I tell you when I at* Venice *did firſt abjure my profeſſion, and ſo, as it were, drew an Indenture, the Spirit of God often admoniſht me: and when at* Cittadella, *I did, as it were, ſet to my ſeal: the Spirit of God often ſuggeſted to me, do not write* Spira, *do not ſeal: yet I reſiſted the Holy Ghoſt, and did both: and at that very preſent* I *did evidently feel a wound inflicted in my very will; ſo although I can ſay, I would believe, yet can* I *not ſay,* I *will believe, God hath denied me the power of will:*

will: and it befals me in this my miſerable eſtate, as with one that is faſt in irons, and his friends coming to ſee him, do pitty his eſtate, and do perſwade him to ſhake off his fetters, and to come out of his bonds, which God knows he would fain do, but cannot: this is my very caſe: you perſwade me to believe: how fain would I *do it, but cannot: O now* I *cannot.* Then violently graſping his hands together, and raiſing himſelf up *Behold* (ſaid he) I *am ſtrong, yet by little and little* I *decay and conſume, and my ſervants would fain preſerve this weary life: but at length the will of God muſt be done, and* I *ſhall periſh miſerably as* I *deſerve: rejoyce ye righteous in the Lord: bleſſed are you whoſe hearts the Lord hath mollified.*

Pſal. 32. 11.

Then

Then after ſome pauſe; *It's wonderful, I earneſtly deſire to pray to God with my heart, yet I cannot; I ſee my damnation, and I know my remedy is onely in Chriſt, yet I cannot ſet my ſelf; lay hold on it; ſuch are the puniſhments of the damned: they confeſs what I confeſs, they repent of their loſs of heaven; they envy the Elect; yet their repentance doth them no good, for they cannot mend their waies.*

As he was thus ſpeaking, he obſerved divers flies that came about him, and ſome lighted on him: *Behold* (ſaid he) *now alſo* * *Beelzebub comes to his banquet, you ſhall ſhortly ſee my end, and in me an example to many of the Juſtice, and Judgment of God.*

* Signifies the god of flies.

About this time came in two Biſhops, with divers

Schollers of the Un verſity, one of them being *Paulus Vergerius*, having obſerved *Spira* more then any other, being continually converſant with him: told him his eſtate was ſuch, as rather ſtood in need of prayer then advice: and therefore deſired him to pray with him in the Lords Prayer; *Spira* conſented, and he began.

[Our Father which art in heaven,] then breaking forth into tears he ſtopped; but they ſaid it is well, your grief is a good ſign: 'I bewail (ſaid he) my 'miſery, for I perceive I am 'forſaken of God, and cannot 'call to him from my heart 'as I was wont to do, yet let us go on, ſaid *Vergerius*.

'Thy kingdom come: O Lord '(ſaid *Spira*) bring me alſo into 'this kingdom: I beſeech thee

ſhut

'ſhut me not out. Then coming to thoſe words, [Give us this day our daily bread:] he added: 'O Lord I have enough & 'abundance to feed this carkaſs 'of mine: but there is another 'bread, I humbly beg the bread 'of thy grace: without which, I 'know I am but a dead man. [Lead us not into temptation:] 'ſeeing Lord that I am brought 'into temptation, help me Lord 'that I may eſcape: the enemy 'hath overcome, help me, I be-'ſeech thee, to overcome this 'cruel Tyrant.

Theſe things he ſpake with a mournful voyce, the tears trickling down abundantly: and expreſſing ſuch affections & paſſion, as turned the bowels of thoſe there preſent, with grief and compunction: they then turning to *Spira*, ſaid: You

know that none can call *Christ Jesus the Lord*, but by the holy Ghost: you must therefore think of your self, according to that soft affection, which you expres in your prayers, inferring thereby that God hath not wholly cast you off, or bereaved you of his Spirit utterly.

Psa. 109. 7. 'I perceive (said *Spira*) that I 'cal on him to my eternal dam- 'nation: for I tel you again, it is 'a new and unheard of exam- 'ple that you finde in me: If *Judas* (said they) had but outlived his daies, which by nature he might have done: he might have repented, and Christ would have received him to mercy: and yet he sinned most grievously against his Master, which did so esteem of him, as to honor him with the dignity of an Apostle, and did maintain and

and feed him : He anſwered, "Chriſt did alſo feed and ho-"nour me, neither yet is my "fault one jot leſs then that of "his : becauſe it is not more "honour to be perſonally pre-"ſent with Chriſt in the fleſh, 'then to be in his preſence now 'by illumination of his holy 'Spirit: and beſides, I deny that 'ever *Judas* could have repen-'ted, how long ſoever he had 'lived : for grace was quite ta-'ken from him, as it is now 'from me.

O *Spira* (ſaid they) you know you are in a Spiritual deſertion, you muſt therefore not believe what Satan ſuggeſts : he was ever a Liar from the beginning, and a meer Impoſtor, and will caſt a thouſand lying fancies into your mind, to beguil you withal; you muſt rather be-

lieve thoſe whom you judg to be in a good eſtate, and more able to diſcern of you then your ſelf: believe us, and we tell you that God will be merci ul unto you.

"O here is the knot (ſaid "*Spira*:) I would I could be- "lieve, but I cannot.

Then he began to reckon up what fearful dreamsand viſions he was continually troubled withal: that he ſaw the divels come flocking into his Chamber, and about his bed, terrifying him with ſtrange noyſes, that theſe were not fancies, but that he ſaw them as really, as the ſtanders by: and that beſides theſe outward terrors, he felt continually, a racking torture of his minde, and a continual butchery of his Conſcience, being the very proper pang

pangs of the damned wights in hell.

Caſt away theſe fancies (ſaid *Gribauldus*;) theſe are but illuſions; humble your ſelf in the preſence of God, and praiſe him. "The dead praiſe not "the Lord (anſwered he) nor 'they that got down into the 'pit: we that are drowned in 'deſpair, are dead and already 'gone down into the pit: what 'hell can there be worſe then 'deſperation; or what greater punishment? the gnawing worm, unquenchable fire, 'horror, confuſion, and (which 'is worſe then all) deſperation 'it ſelf continually tortures me, 'and now I count my preſent 'eſtate worſe, then if my ſoul '(ſeparated from my body) 'were with *Judas* and the reſt 'of the damned; and therefore, Pſal. 6. 5.

'now desire rather to be there,
'then thus to live in the body.

One being present, repeated certain words out of the *Psalms*:

Psal. 89. 30. If thy Children forsake my Law, and walk not in my Judgments; I will visite their transgressions with rods, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving kindness I wil not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: mark this, O *Spira*, my Covenant I will not break.

'These promises (said *Spira*)
'belong only to the Elect,
'which if tempted, may fall in-
Prov. 24. 16. 'sin; but are again lifted up
Psal. 37. 24. 'and recovered out: as the
'Prophet *saith*, though he fall,
'he shall not be utterly cast
'down, for the Lord upholdeth him: therefore *Peter* could
'rise, for he was Elected, but
'the

'the reprobate when they fall, 'cannot riſe again, as appears 'in *Cain*, *Saul*, and *Judas*: God 'deals one way with the Elect, 'and another with Reprobates.

The next day he prayed with them in the Latine tongue, and that with excellent affection, as outwardly appeared: bleſſed be God (ſaid *Vergerius*:) theſe are no ſigns of eternal reprobation: you muſt not, O *Spira*, ſeek out the ſecret counſels of Gods election and reprobation: for no man can know, ſo long as he lives, whether by his good or bad deeds, he be worthy of Gods love or anger: do you not know that the Prophet *David* complained, that God had caſt off his Soul.

Eccleſ. 9. 1. Pſal. 88. 14.

I know all this (quoth *Spira*) *I know the mercies of God are infinite, and do ſurpaſs the ſins of the*

whole world, and that they are effectual to all that believe, but this faith, and this hope, is the gift of God: O that he would give it me: but it is as impoſsible as to drink up the ſea at a draught: As for that of Solomon, *if he had ever tryed that which I feel by woful experience, he would never have ſpoken as he did: but the truth is, never had mortal man ſuch an evident experience of Gods anger and hatred againſt him, as I have: you that are in a good eſtate, think repentance and faith to be work of great facility: and therefore you think it an eaſie matter to perſwade a man to believe: the whole need not the Phyſitian: and he that is well, can ſoon give counſell to ſuch as are ill: but this is the hell to me, my heart is hardned, I cannot believe: many are called, but few are choſen.*

Upon

Upon what ground (ſaid they) do you conceive ſo ill an opinion of your ſelf?

"I once did know God to be "my Father, not only by crea "tion, but by regeneration, I "knew him by his beloved "Son, the author and finiſher "of our ſalvation: I could pray "to him, and hope for pardon "of ſins from him: I had a taſte "of his ſweetneſs peace, & com- "fort: now contrarily, I know "God not as a Father, but as an "enemy: what more? my heart "hates God, & ſeeks to get "above him: I have nothing elſe "to fly to but terror & deſpair.

Belike you think then (ſaid they) that thoſe who have the earneſt and firſt fruits of Gods Spirit, may notwithſtanding fall away.

The judgments of God are a deep

Pſal.36. 6. Rom.11. 33. 1 Cor. 10.12.

deep abyſs (ſaid he) *we are ſoon drowned if we enter into them; he that thinks he ſtandeth, let him take heed leſt he fall: as for my ſelf,* I *know* I *am fallen back; and that* I *once did know the truth; though it may be not ſo throughly:* I *know not what elſe to ſay, but that* I *am one of that number, which God hath threatned to tear in pieces.*

Pſal. 50. 22.

Say not ſo (anſwered they;) for God may come, though at the laſt hour; keep hold therefore, at the leaſt by hope.

'This *(quoth he)* is my caſe, I 'tel you I cannot, God hath de- 'prived me of hope; this brings 'terror to my mind, and pines 'this body which now is ſo 'weak, as it cannot perform the 'ſeveral offices thereof: for as 'the Elect have the Spirit teſti- 'fying that they are the ſons of

Rom.8. 16.

God

'God; ſo the Reprobates, even
'while they live, do often feel a
'worm in their conſcience,
'whereby they are condemned
'already; & therefore as I per-
'ceived this wound inflicted
'on my mind and will, I knew
'that I wanted the gifts of ſa-
'ving grace, & that I was utter-
'ly undone; God chaſtneth his
'children with temporary affli- 1 Cor. 11. 33.
'ctions, that they may come as
'gold out of the fire; but pun- Rom. 12 28.
'iſheth the wicked with blind-
'neſs in their underſtandings, Joh. 18.
'& hardneſs of heart; & wo be 42.
'to ſuch, from whom God
'takes his holy Spirit.

Here one rebuked him, and told him, he gave too much credit to ſenſe, that he was not to believe himſelf, but rather him that was in a good ſtate, & I teſtifie to you (ſaid he) that God will be merciful to you. Nay

"Nay (anſwered he) for be-
"cauſe I am in this ill eſtate,
"therefore can I believe no-
"thing but what is contrary to
"my ſalvation and comfort:
"but you that are ſo confi-
"dent of your good eſtate: look
"that it be true, for it is no ſuch
"ſmall matter to be aſſured of
"ſincerity: a man had need be
"exceeding ſtrongly ground-
"ed in the truth, before he can
"be able to affirm ſuch a mat-
"ter as you now do: It is not
"the performance of a few out-
"ward duties, but a mighty con-
"ſtant labour, with all intention
"of heart and affection; with
"full deſire and endeavour, conti-
"nually to ſet forth Gods glory:
"there muſt be neither fear of Le-
"gates, Inquiſitors, Priſons, nor a-
"ny death whatſoever, many think
"themſelves happy that are not: it
Matth. 7. 22. "is not every one that ſaith, Lord,
"Lord, that ſhall go to heaven.

They

They came another day, and found him with his eyes ſhut, as if he had been drouzie and very loath to diſcourſe : at which time there came in alſo a grave man from *Cittad lla*, who demanded of *Spira*, if he knew him, or not : he lifting up his eye-lids, and not ſuddenly remembring him, the man ſaid to him : I *am Presbyter Antonie Fontamia* : I was with you at *Venice*, ſome 8. weeks ſince : "O curſed day (ſaid *Spira*) O "curſed day : O that I had ne- "never gone thither : would "God I had then dyed.

Afterwards came in a Prieſt called, *Bernardinus Sardonius*, bringing with him a book of Exorciſmes, to conjure this divel : whom when *Spira* ſaw, ſhaking his head he ſaid.

"I am verily perſwaded indeed "that

" that God hath left me to the " power of the divels: but such " they are, as are not to be " found in your Letany: nei- " ther will they be cast out by " spels: The Prieft proceeding in his intended purpose; with a strange uncouth gesture and a loud voice, adjured the spirit to come into *Spira's* tongue, & to answer: *Spira* deriding his fruitless labour, with a sigh, turned from him: a Bishop being there present, said to *Spira*; brother God hath put vertue into the word and Sacraments: and we have used the one means, and find not that effect which we desire: shall we try the efficacy of the Sacraments? surely if you take it, as a true Christian ought to receive the body and blood of Christ, it will prove a soveraign medicine for your sick soul. " This

This I cannot do (anſwered, he;) for they that have no right to the promiſes, have no right to the ſeals: *the Euchariſt was appointed onely for believers: if we have not faith, we eat and drink judgement to our ſelves; I received it about a moneth ſince, but I did not wel in ſo doing; for I took it by conſtraint, and ſo I took it to my deeper condemnation.* 1 Cor. 11.33.

Here *Vergerius* began to importune him earneſtly to beware, that he did not wilfully reſiſt grace, and put himſelf out of Heaven; charging him vehemently, by all the love that was between them: by the love which he bare to his children, yea to his own ſoul; that he would ſet himſelf, ſeriouſly to return to that faith and hope, which once he had in

in the death of Chriſt: with many ſuch like words: *Spira* having heard much of the like matter formerly: and being ſomewhat moved, ſaid, *You do but repeat*, Vergerius: *what ſhould I hope? why ſhould I believe? God hath taken faith from me: ſhew me then whether I ſhall I go: ſhew me a Haven whereto I ſhall retire: you tell me of Gods mercy, when as God hath caſt me off: you tell me of Chriſts interceſsion, I have denyed him: you command me to believe, I ſay I cannot: you bring me no comfort: your command is as impoſsible for me to obey, as to keep the Moral Law: if you ſhould perſwade one to love God, with all his heart, ſoul and ſtrength: and God gives him not the power, can he perform your deſire? doth not the Church teach us to ſing; direct*

rect us, O Lord, to love thy Commandements? hypocrites ſay that they love God with all their heart, but they lye: for my part I will not lye, but tell you plainly; ſuch is my caſe, that though you ſhould never ſo much importune me to hope or believe, though I deſire it, yet I cannot: for God (as a puniſhment of my wickedneſs) hath taken away from me all his ſaving graces; faith, hope, and all: I am not the man therefore that you take me for: belike you think I delight in this eſtate; if I could conceive but the leaſt ſpark of hope of a better eſtate hereafter, I would not refuſe to endure the moſt heavy weight of the wrath of that great God; yea, for twenty thouſand years, ſo that I might at length attain to the end of that miſery, which I now know will be eternal: but I *tell you, my will*

will is wounded: who longs more to believe, then I do? but all the ground-work of my hope is quite gone; for if the teſtimonies of holy Scripture be true, (as they are moſt certainly true) is not this as true: whoſoever denies me before men, him (ſaith Chriſt) *will I deny before my Father which is in heaven? is not this properly my caſe, as if it had purpoſely been intended againſt this very perſon of mine? and I pray you, what ſhall become of ſuch as Chriſt denyeth; ſeeing there is no other Name under heaven, whereby you look to be ſaved? what ſaith Saint* Paul *to the* Hebrews *?* Heb. 6. *it is impoſsible for thoſe who were once enlightned, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghoſt, if they fall away, to be renewed to repentance: what can be more plain*

plain againſt me? Is not that Scripture alſo; if we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledg of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain looking for of judgement: the Scripture ſpeaks of me, Saint Paul meets me; Saint Peter tels me, it had been better I had not known the way of righteouſneſſe, then after I have known, to turn from the holy Commandement: it had been better I had not known, and yet then my condemnation had been moſt certain: do you not ſee evidently, that I have wilfully denied the known truth; may juſtly expect not onely damnation, but worſe, if worſe may be imagined? God will have me undergo the juſt puniſhment of my ſin, and make me an example of his wrath for your ſakes.

and 10. 26.

1 Pet. 2. 21.

The

The company preſent admired his diſcourſe, ſo grievouſly accuſing himſelf of his fore-paſt life; ſo gravely and wiſely dilating, concerning the judgements of God, that they then were convinced, that it was not frenzy or madneſſe, that had poſſeſſed him: and being as it were, in admiration of his eſtate, *Spira* proceeded in again in this manner. "Take "heed to your ſelves, it is no "light or eaſie matter to be a "Chriſtian; it is not Baptiſm, "or reading of the Scriptures, "or boaſting of faith in Chriſt "(though even theſe are good) "that can prove one to be an "abſolute Chriſtan: you know "what I ſaid before, there "muſt be a conformity in life; "a Chriſtian muſt be ſtrong, "unconquerable, not carrying "an

" an obſcure profeſſion, but re-
" ſolute; expreſſing the Image
" of Chriſt, and holding out
" againſt all oppoſition, to the
" laſt breath: he muſt give all
" diligence, by righteouſneſſe,
" and holineſſe, to make his
" calling and election ſure: ma-
" ny there are that ſnatch at the
" promiſes in the Goſpel, as if
" they undoubtedly did be-
" long to them; and yet they
" remain ſluggiſh, and care-
" leſſe, and being flattered by
" the things of this preſent
" world, they paſs in their
" courſe in quietneſſe and ſe-
" curity, as if they were the
" onely happy men; whom
" nevertheleſſe the Lord in his
" providence hath ordained
" to eternal wrath; as you
" may ſee in Saints *Lukes* Rich Luk. 16.
" man: thus it was with me,
" there

" therefore take heed.

Then came one of his Nephews, and offered him ſome ſuſtenance, which he diſdainfully refuſing, ſo moved the young mans choler, that he charged him with hypocriſie and diſſimulation, or frenzy; to whom *Spira* gravely anſwering, ſaid.

You may interpret the matter as you will: but I am ſure, I *am not only the Actor, but the argument and matter of the Tragedy; I would it were frenzy either fained or true; for if it were fained, I could put it off at pleaſure; if it were a real frenzy, yet there were ſome hope left of Gods mercy, whereas now there is none: for I know that God hath pronounced me an enemy, and guilty of high Treaſon againſt his Majeſty; I am a caſt-away, a vaſſall of*

of wrath: yet dare you call it diſſembling and frenzy; and can mock at the formidable example of the heavy wrath of God, that ſhould teach you fear and terror: But it is natural to the fleſh, either out of malice or ignorance, to ſpeak perverſly of the works of God: The natural man diſcerneth not of the things that are of God, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.

How can this be (ſaid *Gribauldus*) that you can thus excellently diſcourſe of the judgments of God, and of the graces of his holy Spirit, that you finde the want of them, and earneſtly deſire them; and yet you think you are utterly deprived of them.

Take this for certain (ſaith he) *I want the main grace of all, and that which is abſolutely neceſſary; and God doth many times extort*

most true and ſtrange teſtimonies of his Majeſties juſtice and mercy; yea, out of the mouthes of very reprobates; for even Judas, *after he had betrayed his Maſter, was conſtrained to confeſs his ſin, and to juſtifie the innocency of Chriſt; and therefore if I do the like, it is no new or ſtrange matter: God hath taken faith from me, and left me other common gifts, for my deeper condemnation: By how much the more I remember what I had, and hear others diſcourſe of what they have, by ſo much the more is my torment, in that I know what I want, and how there is no way be relieved.*

Matth. 27.4.

Thus ſpake he, the tears all the while trickling down; profeſſing that his pangs were ſuch, as that the damned wights in hell endure not the like miſery; that his eſtate was

worſe

worſe then that of *Cain* or *Judas*, and therefore he deſired to die. *Yet behold* (ſaith he) *the Scriptures are accompliſhed in me; they ſhall deſire to die, and death ſhall flie from them*: And verily, he ſeemed exceedingly to fear, leſt his life ſhould be drawn out to a longer thred; and finding no eaſe or reſt, ever and anon, cryed out, *O miſerable wretch, O miſerable wretch*; then turning to the Company, he beſought them in this manner; Rev. 9.6.

O Brethren, take a diligent heed to your life; make more account of the gifts of Gods Spirit then I have done; learn to beware my miſery; think not you are aſſured Chriſtians, becauſe you underſtand ſomething of the Goſpel; take heed you grow not ſecure on that ground: be conſtant and im-

moveable in the maintenance of your profeſsion: Confeſs even until death, if you be called thereto; He that loveth father, mother, brothers, ſiſters, ſons, daughters, kindred, houſes, lands, more then Chriſt, is not worthy of him.

Luc. 9. 62.

Theſe words (ſaid they) do not ſound like the words of a wicked Reprobate.

I do but herein imitate (ſaid Spira) *the rich Glutton in the Goſpel, who though in hell, yet was careful, that his brethren ſhould not come to that place of torment: and* I *ſay to you Brethren, take heed of this miſerable eſtate wherein* I *am.*

Then turning himſelf to certain young men that were preſent, he deſired them to conceive him aright. I *do not ſpeak this to derogate from the certainty of ſaving faith, and the promiſes of*

of the Goſpel, for they are moſt ſure; but take heed of relying on that faith that works not a holy & unblameable life, worthy of a believer; credit me, it wil fail, I have tryed it: I preſumed I had gotten the right faith; I preached it to others, I had all places of Scripture in memory that might ſupport it; I thought my ſelf ſure, and in the mean time living impiouſly and careleſly; behold, now the judgements of God have overtaken me; not to correction, but to condemnation: And now you would have me to believe, but it will not be; for I feel too late, that good things belong only to ſuch as are good; whoſe ſins are covered with Chriſts death and blood, as with a vail, and guarded with his righteous merits from the flood of Gods wrath, even as with a mighty wall, leſt miſerable mortals ſhould be ſwallowed

up with greatneſſe of their ſins: But as for me, I have, as it were, wilfully with mine hands pulled down this Rampire; behinde which I might have reſted in ſafety and now are the ſwelling waters come even to my ſoul, and I am caſt away.

One of his familiar friends chanced to ſay, That certainly he was overcome with melancholly; which being overheard, *Spira* anſwered;

Well, be it ſo, ſeeing you will needs have it ſo; for thus alſo is Gods wrath manifeſted againſt me, in that he hath taken from me the uſe of mine Underſtanding & Reaſon, ſo as I can neither rightly eſteem and judg of my diſtemper, nor hope of remedy: You ſee Brethren, what a dangerous thing it is, to ſtop or ſtay in things that concern Gods glory; eſpecially to diſ-

ſemble.

ſemble upon any terms: What a fearful thing is it, to be neer and almoſt a Chriſtian? never was the like examp'e to this of mine; and therefore, if you be wiſe, you will ſeriouſly conſider thereof. O that God would let looſe his hand from me; that it were with me now, as in times paſt, I would ſcorn the threats of the moſt cruel Tyrants, bear torments with invincible reſolution, and glory in the outward profeſsion of Chriſt, till I were choaked in the flame, and my body conſumed to aſhes.

You ſay, you are deſperate, O *Spira* (ſaid they,) why then do not ſtrive with ſome weapon or other, violently to make an end of your life, as deſperate men uſe to do? *Let me have a ſword* (ſaid *Spira*) why what would you do with

it? (quoth they) *I cannot tell you* (ſaid he) *what this minde would move me to, upon occaſion, nor what I would do.*

They perceiving ſmall effect of all this their labour, but rather that he grew worſe: For the avoiding of concourſe of people; for every day ſeldom fewer then twenty continued with him, and to ſtop the courſe of fame, which was continually blown abroad of him; they conſult to carry him back again into his own Countrey; and thoſe his friends that came to comfort him, began to take their leaves of him: *Vergerius* amongſt the reſt, required that at their parting they might pray together with him: *Spira* hardly conſented, and as unwillingly performed: For he ſaid, *My heart is eſtranged*

eſtranged from God, I cannot call him Father from my heart; all good motions are now quite gone, my heart is full of malediction, hatred, and blaſphemy againſt God: I finde I grow more and more hardned in heart, and cannot ſtoop nor help my ſelf: Your prayers for me ſhall turn to your own benefit, they can do me no good.

Vergerius came to take his leave of him, whom *Spira* embracing, ſaid, *Although I know that nothing can bring any benefit to me a Reprobate; but that every thing ſhall tend to my deeper condemnation: yet I give you moſt hearty thanks, for your kind office of love and good will; and the Lord return it unto you, with a plentiful increaſe of all good.*

The next day being brought down

down to his intended journey, by the way looking round about him with a ghaſtly look, he ſaw a knife lying on a table, to which he running haſtily, ſnatched hold of, as intending to miſchief himſelf; but his friends laying hold of him, ſtopped him in his purpoſe: whereupon with indignation, he ſaid, *I would I were above God, for I know he will have no mercy on me.*

Thus went he homewards, often ſaying, that he envyed the condition of *Cain* and *Judas*: He lay about eight weeks in this caſe, in a continual burning, neither deſiring, nor receiving any thing but by force, and that without diſgeſtion ſo ſpent, that he appeared a perfect Anatomy: expreſſing to the view nothing but

but ſinews and bones: vehemently raging for drink: ever pining, yet fearful to live long: dreadful of Hell, yet coveting death: in a continual torment, yet his own tormentor: And thus conſuming himſelf with grief and horror, impatience and deſpair, like a living man in Hell: he repreſented an extraordinary example of the juſtice and power of God. And thus (as far as appeareth) within a few dayes after his arrival at his own home, he departed this preſent life: Yet an occaſion to make us remember, *That ſecret things belong unto the Lord our God*: but charity to man, to teach him to hope all things.

FINIS.